The Littlest Shepherd

A Christmas Interlude

By
FLORENCE RYERSON
and
COLIN CLEMENTS

SAMUEL FRENCH
Founded 1845 . Incorporated 1899
25 West 45th St.
New York City
811 West 7th St.
Los Angeles

PRICE 35 CENTS

PRICE 40¢

PLAYS OF RACHEL FIELD

THE BAD PENNY

Drama. 1 act. By Rachel Field. Interior. Modern costumes. 30 minutes.

Lil Penny, who left the home of her Puritan family to become an actress, became known as the "Bad Penny." When the play opens, we find her sisters apprehensive for fear that Lil may turn up and claim her share of what little remains of the family fortunes. Lil, like the proverbial bad penny, does return and in a very poignant scene tries to reestablish herself with her sisters. After she is gone it develops that the "Bad Penny" is a very rich woman, and the sisters are left to drink the dregs of disappointment.

(Royalty, $5.00.) In *One-Act Plays for Stage and Study, VI,* $3.00, also separately, 35 cents.

THE CROSS-STITCH HEART

Fantasy. 1 act. By Rachel Field. 2 males, 3 females. Interior. Early American costumes. 35 minutes.

All about old-fashioned samplers. A delicate fantasy with music by Clare Kummer included.

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Comedy. 1 act. By Rachel Field. 2 males, 4 females. Interior. Fantastic costumes. 40 minutes.

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Harlequinade. By Rachel Field. 3 males, 1 female. Interior. Harlequin-Columbine costumes. 30 minutes.

Again the lovely Columbine is ordered about by blundering old Pantaloon, but she is now his stenographer, and he runs a soap-factory. Harlequin, the clerk, loves Columbine, but so does Scapino, the villain and a prosperous traveling salesman. How Columbine remains true to type even in a modern setting gives a new twist to an old favorite.

(Royalty, $5.00.) Price, 35 cents.

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THE LITTLEST SHEPHERD

CHARACTERS

SPEAKER OF THE PROLOGUE.
DAVID, *a boy of ten or twelve.*
A LITTLE GIRL.

THE TABLEAU

THE ANGEL OF GOD.
MARY.
JOSEPH.
THE WISE MAN OF THE EAST.
THE WISE MAN OF THE SOUTH.
THE WISE MAN OF THE NORTH.
THREE SHEPHERDS.

TIME. The first Christmas.

PLACE. A field, beyond the walls of Bethlehem.

NOTE: This play has been so constructed as to make it possible for production in a church.

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The Littlest Shepherd

[*The curtains part and the* SPEAKER OF THE PROLOGUE, *dressed in a long, full-sleeved gown of some rich, dark red material, steps forward; with her hands folded simply before her, she stands for a moment till all is quiet—then speaks.*]

THE PROLOGUE

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem, of Judea, in the days of Herod the King, it was the fulfillment of that which had been written by the prophet:

"And thou Bethlehem, land of Judea,
Art in no wise least among the princes of Juda:
For out of thee shall come forth a King
Who shall be Shepherd of my people of Israel."

And, as a sign from God that Jesus was born upon earth, there shone high in the heavens a bright star, the like of which had never been seen before that time. Now it came to pass that three wise men: a King of the East, a King of the South, and a King of the North, saw the star moving through the heavens and followed it until they came at last to the lowly manger where lay the Holy Babe, and with Him was Mary, His mother. When they saw all this, they fell down upon their knees in worship, and offered unto Jesus rich gifts of gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

It so happened that in the fields, far beyond the white walls of the little town of Bethlehem, there were three shepherds, watching their flocks by night; they, also, saw the strange star in the heavens and, taking up their shepherd crooks, followed the star until they came at last to the place where Jesus lay. And when they had come before Him, they fell down upon their knees and worshipped and gave thanksgiving; in their hands they carried no rich gifts of gold or precious stones, for they were very poor, but their hearts were filled to overflowing with happiness, and happiness is more precious than all the riches of the world, for it endureth forever.

Now, before they set forth to follow the star which led them to Bethlehem, they put their flocks in the care of David, the littlest shepherd, and David did not go with them on their pilgrimage and yet, when they returned, the boy told them all that had come to pass as they knelt at the feet of Our Lord on that night of His nativity. And this is the story of David, the Children's Shepherd.

[*With a low bow, the* SPEAKER OF THE PROLOGUE *disappears between the curtains. The lights begin to fade. There is a moment of silence and the curtains are slowly drawn back, disclosing a night field near the town of Bethlehem. Near the center there is a large rock; on either side are banks of palm, cedar or other trees. At the back is a stretch of dark blue sky. The rock may be constructed by tacking wadded newspaper about the sides of a packing box, and then covering it with brown burlap. The night sky should be a "transparency" of dark blue or black net.*]

[*As the curtains part the scene is almost dark. A boy of ten or twelve enters from the right. He is dressed in a sheepskin which is fastened on one shoulder. His feet are bare and he carries a shepherd crook. As he enters, he is walking backward, waving and calling, as though to a group of people in the distance.*]

DAVID. Good-bye! Good-bye! Don't worry. . . . I'll take good care of the sheep! Good-bye! [*He pauses, then turns and crosses to the rock. For a moment he stands looking back and waving, then he drops his hand and is silent. A little sob escapes him. He throws himself on the rock and begins to cry softly.*] Oh, I wanted to go! I wanted to go with them so!

[*As he cries, a little girl enters from the left. She is smaller than* DAVID, *and dressed simply in a straight, dark costume. Her feet are bare, and her hair hangs loose. For a moment she watches him, then she puts out her hand and touches his shoulder.* DAVID *springs up, ashamed to be seen crying by a girl, and quickly passes his arm across his eyes.*]

THE GIRL. What's the matter, boy?

DAVID. Nothing—nothing's the matter at all.

THE GIRL. There must be something the matter or you wouldn't be crying like that.

DAVID. I wasn't crying—I was laughing.

THE GIRL. Tell me what you were laughing at. I want to laugh, too!

DAVID. I was just laughing—because . . . [*He*

hesitates.] I was laughing because I am so happy. You see . . . [*He swaggers a little.*] You see, all the other shepherds have gone off following a star and they left me in charge of the flocks. I can tell you, it's a responsible position—to be in charge of all the flocks, I mean. You have to watch out pretty sharply for wolves and things.

THE GIRL. Oh, are there wolves about?

DAVID. Well, I've never seen one, and I don't know as I've ever seen anyone who's seen one, but there might be wolves—and so it's a very responsible position, to be watching the flocks.

THE GIRL. Then, how'd the other shepherds happen to go and leave you in charge?

DAVID. They wanted to go. They wanted to follow the star.

THE GIRL. What star?

DAVID. [*Pointing up*] The great big one. It's been getting larger every night and people have been passing down the road, great kings and priests and soothsayers, all of them going to Bethlehem. They say there's an ancient prophecy that a baby will be born in the town to-night, a baby who will some day be king of the world. [*He forgets himself for a moment and speaks with a sob in his voice.*] I—I'd love to see the king of the world!

THE GIRL. Then, why didn't you go with the others?

DAVID. Somebody had to watch the sheep, you know, and the others wanted to go. When the kings

went by with the elephants and camels and milky-white mules, all carrying gifts for the baby, the other shepherds simply had to go into town and see it all. They said the sheep would be safe enough for one night. I went with them as far as the cross-roads, but I couldn't help thinking about the sheep, and how a wolf might come . . . so I had to come back to stay with the flocks.

THE GIRL. And that's why you were crying.

DAVID. I wasn't really crying. I was just thinking —about what was going on in the town—and wishing I could see it, too.

THE GIRL. I want to see it all! Is it very far to Bethlehem?

DAVID. Not very. You keep right on down the road.

THE GIRL. And will I find food there? I've not had anything to eat for a long time. I'm hungry as can be.

DAVID. [*Doubtfully*] I don't know. There's been a dreadful crowd going there all day long. No, I'm afraid there won't be very much food left. [*Suddenly.*] But if you'll wait, you can have some of my supper. [*He brings out a small bundle from behind the rock.*] I'll be glad to share it with you.

THE GIRL. No, I can't wait. I don't want to miss the elephants and the camels and the kings with their gifts . . .

DAVID. That isn't what I want to see. I want to see the Holy Babe.

THE GIRL. Then, why don't you come along with me?

DAVID. I told you why I couldn't come! I've got to watch the sheep.

THE GIRL. But I don't think that's any reason at all! Think of it . . . elephants and camels and Kings of the North, and South, and East with jewels and presents—and the King of Kings Himself—and you're going to miss all that just to stay and watch a lot of silly sheep!

DAVID. But if something should happen to them . . .

THE GIRL. What could happen? You told me yourself you'd never even seen anyone who'd seen a wolf.

DAVID. I know, I know.

THE GIRL. Think about the things that are going on in town! Think of how you can tell your grandchildren about seeing the Holy Babe!

DAVID. I have thought about it! And I want to go, more than I've ever wanted anything—anything, in my whole life.

THE GIRL. [*Taking his hand*] Then, come along!

DAVID. [*Looking over the rock as though toward the sheep*] I—I want to come with you, and yet—look at the sheep down there. They're so helpless, and so trusting. If anything should happen to them, I couldn't bear it! [*Something catches in his throat.*] Please—please don't talk any more. Just go, and leave me with my sheep!

THE GIRL. All right! Only I think you're a silly—silly! [*She goes out.*]

DAVID. Wait—wait! [*He runs after her with a little bundle.*] Here—take this.

THE GIRL. What is it?

DAVID. [*Awkwardly*] It—it's just some bread and cheese. You'll be awfully hungry before you reach the town.

THE GIRL. But won't you be hungry?

DAVID. A little, I guess. But you—you're a girl and I—I'm a man!

THE GIRL. [*Laughing a gentle little laugh*] Thank you, and good-bye, David! [*She exits quickly.*]

DAVID. [*In astonishment*] How—how did she know my name? [*He crosses slowly back to the rock and sits down, his head in his hands. He is evidently growing sleepier and sleepier, for he rubs his eyes and mutters to himself.*] I—I mustn't go to sleep—I mustn't. I must watch my sheep.

[*As he murmurs to himself, the lights gradually grow brighter.* THE GIRL *appears at the side of the stage. Her dark dress has been removed, disclosing a silver and gray gown which catches and reflects the light in a myriad of flying stars. She wears a high headdress with a great star upon it and there are silver sandals on her feet. She dances across the stage toward the drowsy boy.*]

THE GIRL. [*Calling musically*] David!

DAVID. [*Startled wide awake*] What? [*His eyes widen.*] Oh! Is—is it you?

THE GIRL. Of course it's me. Why are you staring like that?

DAVID. Because you look so changed.

THE GIRL. I'm really not changed at all. It's only that I didn't want you to know who I really was.

DAVID. Who are you?

THE GIRL. I'm your star, David.

DAVID. My star?

THE GIRL. Yes; your star. Every child in the world has a star—his very own star—and it shows just what kind of a child he is. When he's good, it's bright; when he's bad—oh, David, when he's bad, it's the saddest, ugliest, dingiest star! And it creeps away back into the very darkest spots in the sky until he's good again!

DAVID. But you—you're beautiful!

THE GIRL. [*Pirouetting*] Yes; I'm beautiful because I'm your star, David. Your star couldn't help but be beautiful. I've come down to make you happy—by giving you the wish of your heart.

DAVID. But I can't—I can't have the wish of my heart. The only thing in the world I want is to see the Holy Babe!

THE GIRL. Wait—just wait—until I blow a little star dust in your eyes!

[*There is soft music and* DAVID *sinks back on the*

rock while THE GIRL *begins to dance. As she dances, she draws nearer and nearer to* DAVID, *making motions toward him. His head begins to droop until he falls fast asleep upon the rock. As he does so, the sound of a distant bell is heard. The lights begin to dim slowly.* THE GIRL *draws to the side of the stage and waves her hand. The sky at the back becomes brighter until it is flooded with light and there, behind, is seen:*]

THE NATIVITY

This may be played either as a tableau or as a pantomime.

THE TABLEAU

[*Before the manger in Bethlehem. Deep in the clean, sweet straw is buried a light—a symbol of the Holy Child. At the back stands the* ANGEL OF GOD, *his great wings folded behind him and his hands stretched out in benediction. He is wearing a white robe with a girdle of gold. At the right is* MARY, *Mother of Jesus. She is wearing a robe of blue and a long white veil which covers her head and falls down over her shoulders. Across from her, on the other side of the manger, kneels* JOSEPH. *He is wearing a heavy robe of dark, homespun material. Behind him are the three shepherds in their simple clothes, made from the skins of sheep. Behind* MARY *are the three kings, holding forth their precious gifts.* THE KING OF THE EAST, *Chinese in character, wears a long, richly embroidered coat of many colors and a small black cap into which are stuck, at various angles, long peacock feathers. His*

skin is yellow, his eyes are small and slanted, and his long black hair is braided. THE KING OF THE SOUTH *wears a robe of gold, lined with crimson; his shoes, also red, are turned up at the toes. Around his head is wound a turban hung with pearls and precious stones. His skin is ebony.* THE KING OF THE NORTH *is older than the other two. He wears a striped coat trimmed with fur, and upon his head is a tall cone-shaped hat with a gold crown about the brow. His hair and his long beard are white.*]

[*From afar is heard a chorus, or a single voice; it comes closer and closer singing:*]

O little town of Bethlehem!
How still we see thee lie;
Above the deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by;
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting Light;
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee to-night.

For Christ is born of Mary,
And gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep
Their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars, together
Proclaim the holy birth!
And praises sing to God the King
And peace to men on earth.

How silently, how silently,
The wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of His heaven.

No ear may hear His coming,
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him, still
The dear Christ enters in.

O holy Child of Bethlehem!
Descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin, and enter in,
Be born in us to-day.
We hear the Christmas angels
The great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us,
Our Lord Emmanuel!

THE PANTOMIME

Same setting as the TABLEAU *except that* MARY, JOSEPH *and* THE ANGEL *alone are visible. The* SHEPHERDS *are the first to enter. They kneel silently before the* VIRGIN *and begin their adoration. They are followed by the* KINGS, *one at a time, who offer their gifts. A group of the people of Bethlehem may be used in the background and slaves may accompany the* KINGS.

[*At the first part of this action,* DAVID *has awakened and sunk to his knees. From this position he watches it. At the end of the song the lights on the* TABLEAU *or* PAGEANT *slowly fade and, at the same time, the lights come up on* DAVID *and* THE GIRL. *The moment the picture at the back has entirely faded out,* DAVID *springs to his feet.*]

DAVID. Oh, have I been asleep? Was it a dream?

THE GIRL. It was no dream, David, but something

you must remember all your life! Something to tell to your children and to your children's children, because it will always be the most beautiful story ever told.

DAVID. The most beautiful story ever told, and I have seen it! Oh, I am so happy—happy . . .

THE GIRL. [*Softly*] That is because you have made others happy, David. It's growing late and I must fly back to the sky, but I'll leave you the magic recipe for life: To be happy, you must first make others happy!

DAVID. I'll never forget! To be happy, you must first make others happy.

THE GIRL. Think of it when you look up and see me! I'm the littlest star in the heavens, just as you are the littlest shepherd on earth. I'm the teeny weeny star, tucked in by the side of the moon. [*She moves toward the side of the stage.*] Good-bye, David, good-bye! Oh, wait a minute! I forgot something!

DAVID. What?

THE GIRL. Sh-h-h! It's a surprise! [*She puts her finger to her lips and whispers to him, then laughs and runs away.*] Good-bye, David. Remember! I'm the littlest star, the one that's cuddled up to the moon! [*She exits.*]

DAVID. Good-bye! Good-bye! [*He waves, then comes forward to the edge of the stage and speaks confidentially.*] Do you know what she told me? She said she'd left, hidden behind the rock, presents for all of you there!

[DAVID *runs to the rock and tussles with it for a moment. In the end he manages to turn it over and underneath is a basket full of gifts, candy or whatever is desired. These he distributes to the children in the audience.*]

If the distribution of gifts is not desired, the curtain may be lowered and the play finished after THE GIRL calls, " Good-bye! "

An alternative way of playing this last scene is to have the gauze curtain raised and the lights come up on the inner stage, after THE GIRL leaves, disclosing a Christmas tree upon which have been hung the gifts. DAVID distributes these.

BIRD ON THE WING

Comedy. 1 act. By James Reach. 2 males, 4 females. Interior. Modern costumes. 35 minutes.

This is a gay and captivating little comedy. The heroine is Ellie Vincent, fifteen and ready for life. She is going on her first real "date," to the Junior Prom at the college. She has jilted her contemporary, Sonny Roberts, and accepted the invitation of Oscar Snootzer, the college eccentric. When Oscar patches up his quarrel with his old girl friend, poor Ellie gets jilted herself—and at the very last minute. Ellie's whole life is blighted and in ruins—for about ten minutes; then she finds a way to rebuild it.

(Royalty, $5.00.) Price, 35 cents.

MISS PERSONALITY PLUS

Comedy. 1 act. By Florence Swope. 3 males, 4 females. Interior. Modern costumes. 35 minutes.

Claude Baker thinks he knows everything—especially about raising children. He irritates his wife no end. A distant cousin writes, informing Claude and Loretta, that she is sending her "little darling girl" for a visit. Claude is delighted—what a chance to prove that he is a great child psychologist! "Miss Personality Plus" arrives: a beautiful, grown young lady! She decides to take Claude down a peg or two, and by the time she is finished, Claude's egotism is greatly reduced. Each member of the family comes under the young lady's influence with devastating comedy effect.

(Royalty, $5.00.) Price, 35 cents.

SOME WOMEN WERE TALKING

Farce. 1 act. By John Kirkpatrick. 1 male, 5 females. Interior. Modern costumes. 35 minutes.

Some women were talking. They began truthfully enough; but as stories of their absent husbands and their wealth, brilliance and importance went the rounds, the barriers of probability broke down. Poor little Millie said Luther was an athlete—a strong man—a giant. Then Luther arrived, standing five foot three in his stocking-feet; of course she couldn't acknowledge him as her husband; he had to be a brother. And what a brother! Because Luther didn't like his wife's prevarication and decided *he'd* tell one—a lie to end *all* lies.

(Royalty, $5.00.) Price, 35 cents.

PLAYS OF RACHEL FIELD

WISDOM TEETH

Comedy. 1 act. By Rachel Field. 1 male, 3 females. Interior. Modern costumes. 15 minutes.

A gay episode dealing with dentists, and those who frequent their waiting-rooms. A shy young hero accompanies an eccentric relative to the dentist, where he meets Romance in the person of a young girl. From a discussion of wisdom teeth the young couple drift to matters of more romantic importance and the outcome is both humorous and satisfactory.

(Royalty, $5.00.) Price, 35 cents.

THE LONDONDERRY AIR

Comedy. 1 act. By Rachel Field. 2 males, 2 females. Interior. New England costumes, 1800. 35 minutes.

A charming character play laid in New England a hundred years ago. The author of *Three Pills in a Bottle* has woven a very pretty romantic story in this new play.

(Royalty, $5.00.) In *One-Act Plays for Stage and Study, III,* $1.50, also separately, 35 cents.

THE PATCHWORK QUILT

Fantasy. 1 act. By Rachel Field. 2 males, 4 females, 1 child. Interior. Modern and old-fashioned costumes. 30 minutes.

A touching little play, centering around an old woman's love for her patchwork quilt, every colored square of which holds for her a memory. By means of these squares the audience is given a glimpse into the past and her youthful courtship and marriage. The part of the old lady provides a chance for a fine piece of character-acting, and also gives an opportunity to use a clever child actress.

(Royalty, $5.00.) Price, 35 cents.

THREE PILLS IN A BOTTLE

Fantasy. 1 act. By Rachel Field. 4 males, 3 females, 1 child. Interior. Fantastic costumes. 30 minutes.

A little sick boy from his window makes friends with passers-by. Each allows his soul to visit the child. The audience is shown how strangely souls may differ from the human beings to whom they belong. Pathos, gaiety, and wistfulness are combined with a big theme. This play has achieved a record of several hundred productions by professional and amateur organizations.

(Royalty, $5.00.) Price, 35 cents.

THE STRANGEST FEELING

Comedy. 1 act. By John Kirkpatrick. 2 males, 4 females. Interior. Modern costumes. 35 minutes.

Ethel couldn't explain why she didn't want to go to the lecture with Johnny; it was just a strange feeling that she ought to stay home. When Johnny returned something had happened. A marvelous dancing teacher appeared and wanted Naomi, Ethel's kid-sister, as a pupil. Johnny was impressed, particularly so when the dancing-teacher proved to be an old flame of his. To the dismay of Ethel and her mother, Johnny invested five hundred dollars in the dancing-school. Then Naomi showed up and although she got spanked for it she saved the day.

(Royalty, $5.00.) Price, 35 cents.

THREE DAY PASS

Drama. 1 act. By Owen Davis. 4 males, 1 female. Interior. Modern costumes. 30 minutes.

Tom Warren, a young soldier, is about to desert because he believes that his sweetheart, Lucy Cutler, has transferred her affections to Al Anderson. Tom's friend, Sergeant Bill Logan, tells Tom's uncle, Henry Warren, of the boy's intention to desert. Henry sends Sergeant Logan to the next room for the old family Bible. Logan returns with the book and Henry reads the glorious history of the Warrens who fought for their country. Tom sees the light and returns to his post.

(Royalty, $5.00.) Price, 35 cents.

AMERICAN SAINT OF DEMOCRACY

Drama. 1 act. By Fred Eastman. 4 males, 3 females. Interior. Colonial costumes. 35 minutes.

John Woolman, a young Quaker of American Colonial times, is requested by his storekeeper employer to write a bill of sale conveying a slave woman to important new customer Mr. Gillespie. The slave appeals to John to save her from being torn from her husband and son. John, opposed to slavery, goes to work on Gillespie's mind, and in a clever and effective way, gains consent to re-write the bill. It turns out that Gillespie buys the slave, her husband and her son—but agrees to set them all free at Christmas time and to employ them at fair wages.

(Royalty, $5.00.) Price, 35 cents.

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